TITLE: Goals without means: A Mertonian critique of Australia's resettlement policy for South Sudanese refugees

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The increased demand for refugee admissions and services in developed countries like Australia makes it important for host countries to understand the refugee resettlement and integration process. Yet, the literature on pathways and processes facilitating and driving integration is under-theorised (Black, 2001) and poorly understood (Ager and Strang, 2008, Phillimore and Goodson, 2008, Spencer, 2006, Strang and Ager, 2010). This paper aims to explore the structures and pathways facilitating the integration of resettled refugees. Using data collected from recently settled South Sudanese refugees and Merton's typology of modes of adaptation as a theoretical framework, the paper demonstrates that Australian government institutions failed to provide accessible pathways and support to Sudanese refugees to navigate institutional means for achieving economic and social inclusion. At a broader level the paper argues that current Australian resettlement policies are dominated by an emphasis on refugees adopting their new country's cultural goals without ensuring that there are effective processes and facilitators to achieve these goals.

Keywords: Refugee integration, Australia, Merton, South Sudanese, Structural exclusion

Introduction

Successful adaptation of resettled refugees depends on individual resources and strategies of refugees, the host society's responses, and the interaction between the two (Berry, 2005, Bourhis et al., 1997, Colic-Peisker and Tilbury, 2003, Zick et al., 2001, Strang and Ager, 2010). There is a considerable literature describing resettlement styles of immigrants (for example, Berry, 1980, Berry, 1992, Berry, 1997, Colic-Peisker and Tilbury, 2003). There are also robust claims that resettlement outcomes are significantly influenced by the attitudes and public policies of the receiving community (Valenta and Bunar, 2010, Stewart, 2009, Valtonen, 2004, Zetter et al., 2002, Colic-Peisker and Tilbury, 2003). But our understanding of how resettlement styles and strategies come about and how they relate to the acculturation expectations and policies of the receiving country is under-developed. Ager and Strang signal the importance of this inter-relationship between individual and institutional factors and call for research exploring this interaction (Ager and Strang, 2008, Strang and Ager, 2010). This paper uses Robert Merton's typology of modes of adaptation (Merton, 1968) and data collected on the resettlement experiences of South Sudanese Australians to explore this

interaction between individual and institutional factors and its impact on resettlement styles and strategies among refugees.

Modes of adaptation theory focuses on the cultural goals towards which all people are expected to strive, and a social structure that provides or restricts access to approved means of reaching these goals (Merton, 1968). Using data collected from recently resettled South Sudanese refugees, the paper demonstrates how lack of governmental engagement to support refugees in navigating means for achieving economic and social inclusion has shaped the resettlement strategies adapted by South Sudanese Australians. At a broader level I propose a disconnect between cultural goals towards which migrants are expected to strive and structures providing access to these goals. While Australian resettlement policies are dominated by an emphasis on migrants adopting their new country's cultural goals (economic participation and conduct affirmed in Australian values), there is considerably less emphasis on ensuring effective means for migrant groups to achieve these goals.

Related to this disconnect between goals and means is the current resettlement discourse by the government and its institutions. The discourse is dominated by opinions on how particular ethnic or racial groups fall short in sharing the normative goals of Australia and are prone to adopt non-functional behaviours in their new country. For example, in 2007 Kevin Andrews, as Minister for Immigration made the claim that Sudanese refugees were failing to integrate into Australian society (Caldwell, 2007). However, Merton proposed that it is not members of particular groups that have dysfunctional behaviour; rather it is elements of institutions which are generally functional for some, but dysfunctional for others. I demonstrate that the successful adaptation of South Sudanese Australians is critically restricted by the Australian Government's failure to provide equitable access to institutional means towards achieving resettlement goals.

Existing theories on types of adaptation by migrants

The increased demand for refugee admissions and services in developed countries makes it important for host countries to understand the resettlement process. While the migration and resettlement experiences of refugees are substantively different from that of voluntary migrants (Berry, 1998, Richmond, 1988, Ward et al., 2001, Feller, 2005), most of what we know about the adaptation of refugees in their resettlement countries comes from studies of migration in general, or studies of particular refugee groups (for example, Colic-Peisker and Tilbury, 2003, Markovic and Manderson, 2000, Nicassio, 1985, Kunz, 1981).

Figure 1 is a synoptic diagram showing the main elements of the four integration related theories discussed in this paper. From this diagram we can see that while there is an overlap between the theories, there are also considerable differences in respect to the conceptualisation of integration outcomes and the focus and construction of causal generative mechanisms leading to those outcomes. A dominant theme in this literature is the acculturation and resettlement styles of migrants, led by John Berry's classification of acculturation strategies.

[Insert Figure 1 here]

Acculturation and adaptation strategies in a new society

Berry's model of acculturation (Berry, 1980, Berry, 1997) explains the process of migration by identifying four primary orientations which immigrants adopt in relation to the interplay between their heritage and host cultures. According to this theory, individuals coming into contact with new cultural groups may: simultaneously retain their heritage cultural identity, while developing the mainstream cultural identity—*integrate*; accommodate their identity to the mainstream culture—*assimilate*; reject the mainstream cultural identity in favour of their heritage identity—*separate*; or reject both mainstream and heritage cultural identifications—*marginalise*.

Berry proposes that immigrants undergo a process of change in a range of psychological functioning, followed by a state of conflict, at which point an adaptation strategy is reached with associated changes in behaviour, attitudes, beliefs and values (Berry, 1980, Berry, 1997). Concerns with Berry's initial model included its lack of emphasis on the acculturation expectations of the receiving society and the identity process of immigrants in a multi-cultural context (Weinreich, 2009). These topics, especially interactions between contextual and personal factors in receiving and immigrant groups, have been a focus of Berry's subsequent work (Berry, 2001, Berry, 2005).

'Active' and 'passive' resettlement styles of refugees

A theorisation specific to the resettlement styles of refugees in Australia, which also considers the host society's responses to refugees, is by Val Colic-Peisker and Farida Tilbury (2003). Based on data from a large sample of recently resettled refugees, the authors propose four main resettlement styles created through interactions between refugees' characteristics and the host society's response to their resettlement. The authors identified two predominantly active (achievers and consumers) and two predominantly passive (endurers and victims) styles. Refugees with active resettlement styles have a positive attitude to their migration; they study, look for jobs, or are in paid employment. They strongly aspire to social and economic integration and are engaged with and largely successful at activating pathways towards their goals. They have links with their own ethnic community as well as with wider Australian society.

In contrast, refugees with a passive resettlement styles are unemployed, or underemployed in menial jobs below their qualifications, and consider studying or learning English inappropriate. The refugees in this form of resettlement could not activate pathways towards social and economic inclusion and no longer strive towards social or economic integration. Instead, they either abandon these ambitions, 'make ends meet' materially and emotionally, or retreat into a 'life of disengagement and inertia' (Colic-Peisker and Tilbury, 2003). The authors concluded that, although resettlement styles depend primarily on refugees' human, social, and cultural capital, they are also significantly influenced by support services provided upon arrival in Australia. Yet, current services for refugees focus on individual impediment rather than pathways and services that could assist economic and social inclusion.

The major finding from the above and other studies conceptualising refugee resettlement (such as, Valenta and Bunar, 2010, Stewart, 2009, Valtonen, 2004, Zetter et al., 2002) is that the resettlement processes of refugees reflect not only the acculturation orientations adopted by migrants, but also acculturation attitudes and expectations of the receiving community and public policies and resources for resettlement programs and services. The next section summarises these factors, including their interaction, in the Australian context.

The Australian context

Since 1947, when the first group of refugees to be resettled arrived, Australia has accepted more than 750,000 refugees (Neumann, 2013). Australia is an augmentative country, and historically, the Australian Government's approach to humanitarian migrants is part of the broader immigration strategy (Jupp, 2007) of supporting population growth and consequent economic prosperity of Australia (Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 2014). Augmentative countries tend to hold more employment opportunities for refugees, especially in low skill fields. At the same time, refugees, like other immigrants, are expected to rapidly contribute to the economic capacity of the country (Kunz, 1981). While in the late 1970s Australia developed a separate refugee policy, the dominant expectation that all immigrants, including refugees, should benefit Australia economically has not changed (Jupp, 2007).

But this framework, I argue, is inappropriate when it comes to the most recent humanitarian migrants to Australia. In fact, there have always been contradictions in policy in analytical terms, but in practical terms the contradiction did not surface until recently. While the total number of humanitarian migrants to Australia has remained steady over the last 15 years, the proportion of resettled refugees from a protracted situation, including from Africa, increased significantly (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2011). As Figure 2 shows the relatively low number of 300 to 500 annual Sudan-born immigrants to Australia suddenly increased between 2003 and 2006 from 3,000 to 6,000 a year. This dramatic, over ten-fold increase ensued partly from Australia's response to persistent international pressure and requests from the UNHCR to resettle some of the six million refugees in Africa living in protracted refugee situations at the time (UNHCR, 2006). These early arrivals have often sponsored relatives and friends to follow, creating a chain migration leading to a further increase of Sudan-born humanitarian immigrants (Schweitzer et al., 2007). The current South Sudanese population of Australia is estimated to be of 30,000 (Lucas et al., 2013).

[Insert Figure 2 here]

Living for prolonged periods in camps, characterised by insecurity, violence, and scant opportunity for education and employment impacts considerably on the physical and mental health and human capital development of refugees (Loescher and Milner, 2009). But, while the characteristics and subsequent needs of humanitarian migrants to Australia have changed dramatically, investment in services and processes supporting the resettlement efforts of humanitarian migrants has not grown apace. An example to illustrate the point is the strong policy and program support between 2003 and 2007 by both the Commonwealth and state governments for the resettlement of refugees in regional and rural areas 'in order to address

the demand for less skilled labour in regional economies and to assist humanitarian entrants to achieve early employment' (Department of Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, 2003). An evaluation of the case studies from the above programs found that the envisaged employment opportunities did not materialise (McDonald-Wilmsen et al., 2009). The finding is not surprising, when we consider that regional and rural areas are typically low in infrastructure and services required to support the development of human capital, such as language and skill development, of resettled refugees.

It is evident then that current Australian policy on resettlement of humanitarian migrants has a strong emphasis on outcomes or markers of integration, such as economic participation. However, these expectations are not adequately supported by effective processes and pathways to enable refugees to achieve those outcomes.

Processes mediating integration outcomes

Ager and Strang (2008) have been influential in conceptualising the process of refugee integration. They identified four core domains of integration and proposed the interactions between them contribute to trajectories of integration. The first domain is key areas of activity in the public arena, such as employment, education, housing and health. These outcomes are seen as indicators of successful integration. The fourth domain represents 'foundational' principles and practices capturing the extent to which refugees are provided with the basis for full and equal engagement within their resettlement society. Between these two domains are processes to mediate between foundational principles and integration outcomes by driving the process of integration and by removing barriers to integration. There are two main types of processes. The first type is social connections (Domain 2), such as social bridges, social bonds and social links (Putnam, 2000, Woolcock, 1998) which are proposed to be fundamental for driving the process of integration at a local level. The other type of processes are facilitators (Domain 3), often under the control of the state, to remove barriers blocking successful integration (Ager and Strang, 2008).

The most relevant claim of Strang and Ager (2010) for this article is the significance of processes driving and facilitating integration. Ager and Strang argued that, although these processes and their inter-relationships with other domains have important policy implications, they are poorly understood and require systematic research (Ager and Strang, 2008, Strang and Ager, 2010). The need for further studies of pathways mediating successful integration has been echoed by other researchers (for example, Black, 2001, Phillimore and Goodson, 2008, Spencer, 2006).

The present paper helps to understand the inter-relationships between domains, identified by Ager and Strang (2008) by systematically exploring the structures and pathways facilitating integration. By combining empirical research with the analytical framework of Merton's modes of adaptation theory, it demonstrates how Australian social structures facilitate or thwart the efforts of South Sudanese humanitarian migrants for integration. The analytical framework of Merton is especially apt for this analysis because of its focus on social structures and processes and the impact these structures have on choices available to people.

Modes of adaptation by Merton

The disparity between people in making structurally determined alternative choices is a pivotal element in Merton's works. In the Mertonian system the social environment of individuals involves a cultural structure, on the one hand, and a social structure, on the other. The cultural structure is a set of normative values governing behaviour common to members of the society or group, while social structure is a set of social relationships in which the capacities of individuals in the social groups are socially structured. In other words, the cultural structure sets goals, while social structure provides the means for making and implementing goals (Crothers, 2004).

These concepts of goals and means are also the two main elements of Merton's typology of modes of adaptation. Specifically, the theory uncovers the tension between cultural values and goals toward which all people are expected to strive and a social structure that restricts access to the approved means of reaching these goals. Merton argued that the prized goals of society, in particular economic success, are valued by all. Opportunities to achieve economic success, however, are not equally distributed. Pathways for some are blocked by inadequate education, low social status, belonging to an ethnic minority and so on. He claims that it is the disassociation between these two main elements of the social environment which set up the conditions for *anomie* and for irregular or non-conforming responses from individuals living in an 'ill-balanced social structure' (Merton, 1968).

The concept of *anomie*, as initially developed by Durkheim and conceived by Merton, is a 'breakdown in the cultural structure, occurring particularly when there is an acute disjunction between the cultural norms and goals and the socially structured capacities of members of the group to act in accord with them' (Merton, 1968). In this view, social structures make possible the means and actions to achieve cultural goals for groups occupying certain statuses within a society and difficult or impossible for other groups. This conceptualisation led to the application of the theory in a broad range research areas in the social sciences, such as mass communication behaviour (Bennis, 1956), deviations from religious orthodoxy (Rosenthal, 1954), or military prison cultures (Cloward, 1959). But, as the function of the concept to explain a diverse range of deviant behaviours became evident, its utility was transferred to explain characteristics of individuals, instead of their environment, and its use became limited to the field of criminology.

Merton identified five modes of behaviour (conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism, and rebellion) which people adopt in response to how well the approved goals and access to means for achieving these goals correspond with each other in particular societies or in particular situations. Individuals may shift between modes as they engage in different spheres of social activity. The choice of response depends on motivation toward cultural goals and the institutional means available to attain them (Merton, 1968).

In stable societies such as Australia, the most common adaptation type is conformity, where individuals attain societal goals by socially accepted means. But when legitimate pathways to

achieving prized social goals are blocked, or become too hard to sustain, Merton argues, people adopt non-conforming conduct, such as, *retreatism*—resistance to both normative goals and their formal institutions; *rebellion*—replacing normative goals and their institutions with new ones; *innovation*—acceptance of normative goals but finding unorthodox means to fulfil them; or *ritualism*, where, in contrast to innovation, one continues to subscribe to the means but abandons the cultural goals.

Ritualism and retreatism are the responses most relevant here. Merton proposes that ritualism is common in societies where social status is largely dependent upon one's achievement (Merton, 1968). This mode of adaptation may be an escape from the disappointment and frustration that for marginalised groups seems inherent in an environment focused on economic success. This type of adaptation is common among immigrants groups where the first generation, often employed in menial jobs, typically becomes part of the most marginalised of the resettlement country. In a sense, their goals are often actioned through their children. As shown by several studies, migrant parents often experience and assess their achievements through an intergenerational rationale; that is what the future holds for their children rather than for themselves (for example, Atwell et al., 2009, Larsen, 2010, Stepick and Stepick, 2003).

While ritualism is the most prevalent response among other migrant groups, this may not be the case for South Sudanese Australians. One contributing factor is the decline in low skilled labour in the manufacturing sector in Australia (Waxman, 2001, Kelly and Lewis, 2003) during the time of South Sudanese arrivals, affording fewer employment options. The other important contributing factor is the unmet expectation among Sudanese parents for their children educational achievement. Many Sudanese children and young people fail to perform to their expectations in a school system which struggles to accommodate their lower skill level, lack of formal learning experience, and different learning styles (Matthews, 2008, Cassity and Gow, 2005). According to latest census data, as many as 7.0 % of Sudanese girls and 6.7 % of Sudanese boys aged 15-19 have not progressed beyond Year 8 (Lucas et al., 2011), compared to 1.4% and 2.0%, respectively, of the overall population (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011b).

Subsequently, taking on menial jobs and activating the goal of economic and social success through their children, has not been a plausible mode of adaptation for many Sudanese families. Instead, Sudanese Australians have turned to other modes of adaptation, particularly retreatism. Although, South Sudanese migrants came to Australia with a strong desire for economic participation, and they pursued with alacrity the means held out to people in Australia to achieve these goals, their hopes were soon dampened. In response, many Sudanese migrants have abandoned the once esteemed normative goals and means of social and economic inclusion, which they fully embraced at the time of their arrival in Australia, but which they soon discovered was largely blocked to them with no hope for realisation.

Two other modes of adaptation identified by Merton are rebellion and innovation. In contrast to the defeatist positions of ritualism and retreatism, the position of a rebel is to denounce

existing goals and means and replace them with new ones. Whereas innovators retain exiting goals but reject of institutional practices, and often turn to illicit means to achieve dominantly economic goals (Merton, 1968). I came across little evidence in participants' narratives of either of these two typologies in the Sudanese community.

Before presenting results from the study, I wish to emphasise that a number of participants in this study have been successful, to varying degrees, in reconciling dominant heritage and Australian cultural goals, and in navigating institutional means towards achieving these goals. Thus the positive adaptation of conformity, while not dominant, is present in the community. The recognition and acknowledgment of this positive outcome both for the individuals and for the larger society is important. But, since the focus of this study is how Australian social structures contribute to adverse resettlement outcomes in the Sudanese community, the emphasis of analysis will be on adaptation of non-conforming conduct.

Methodology

I approached the study from a critical realist grounded theory design. The key feature of critical realism, founded by Roy Bhaskar in the 1970s, is the rejection of 'epistemic fallacy' which conflates reality with our knowledge of reality (Bhaskar, 1978). That is, while critical realism recognises that there exists a reality independent of our representation of it, it acknowledges that our knowledge of reality is subject to a range of social constructions. Critical realism allowed me to go beyond identifying generalisable goals or identifying the lived experiences of social actors to develop deeper levels of explanation and understanding (Oliver, 2012).

Central to my approach was giving voice to Sudanese Australians to understand how they create a sense of meaning and coherence in life within their new surroundings. Accordingly, I used grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006, Glaser and Strauss, 1967) for methodology. The power of this methodology is its primarily inductive analytic process that leads to theorising how actions, meanings and social structures are constructed. Rather than forcing preconceived ideas upon the data, theory has to 'earn' its way into the analysis based on extensive inductive analytical work (Charmaz, 2006).

Integrating grounded theory with critical realism provided a robust research design to bring together individual and institutional level analysis even though they exist on different ontological levels. That is, grounded theory methodology provided a method to attend to evidence and meanings within the Sudanese community, while critical realist enquiry allowed me to go beyond describing meanings, to examining and analysing the structures that generate them. While the use of critical realist grounded theory design has not yet received extensive application, it has been critically evaluated and detailed assessment has supported its use as a coherent theory/method package (for example, Oliver, 2012, Clarke, 2003).

Data were collected, between 2009 and 2012, through ethnographic engagement with the Sudanese community and individual interviews with Sudanese men and women, as well as Sudanese and non-Sudanese community workers from the four Australian cities of Canberra,

Adelaide, Sydney and Melbourne. More than half of Australia's South Sudanese population are residents of the two latter cities (Lucas et al., 2013). Initial snowball and convenience sampling procedures progressed to purposive sampling as the research advanced. Altogether 41 people were interviewed, 32 of whom were from Southern Sudan and had immigrated to Australia less than 10 years ago. The majority of participants were Dinka or Nuer, while a smaller proportion were from other tribes. About one-third of the participants were women. The age range of participants was between 18 and 50. A third of the participants stated a tertiary education and another third a secondary education level. Nearly half of the participants were single. The rest of the participants were married, but not always cohabited with their partner. About one-third of the participants were employed, and nearly all participants were pursuing some form of education or training. All participants lived in urban areas at the time of the interview.

In addition, nine Sudanese and non-Sudanese community workers who had close professional connection with the community (in the capacity of community development workers, refugee counsellors, and school counsellors) were interviewed for their insights about the resettlement experiences and challenges of the community. Formal interviews were between 30 and 90 minutes long, and all participants were interviewed in English, which most could speak well.

Data were analysed and increasingly abstracted using constant comparative methods of grounded theory. While interviews were the primary source of data, this information was augmented and informed through regular attendance at community meetings, celebrations and church services as part of my ethnographic fieldwork. This use of multiple methods and data sources brought layered, yet convergent meanings (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) to the research and has contributed significantly to the trustworthiness of the methods (Maxwell, 1992).

Result

Employment – pathway to inclusion and security

Like most South Sudanese Australians, participants in this study did not leave their homeland voluntarily, nor did they do so with aspirations for economic and social benefits. They fled from violence, war, persecution, or death. Nevertheless, upon their resettlement in Australia they all had hopes that they would feel included in their new country. For some participants, these hopes meant the opportunity to re-establish their life before the war. But for most participants it also meant strong desires and expectations to connect with the economic, social, cultural and political life of Australia. Below are some examples of poignant statements about the relationship between employment and integration and a sense of belonging in their new country.

Settlement means work. I was a principal in my country, director of education, but when I came here all of this was disrupted, I wasn't able to get a position in education, and I think I will not get it. So I went to the factory to get a job and they asked me if I ever worked in the factory? I said no, and they said this is not a job for you then. So I can't get

professional work here and I can't work in the factory either, so where can I go? I'm no use in here. Before I came here I felt belonging in Africa, but here? (Male participant)

When you are working you are not homesick. And of course everybody wants to work, no one wants to stay at home, but of course language is an issue. (Female participant)

Respondents also saw employment as an important opening to interact with other members of Australian society, to learn about the new cultural and social environment, and thus become more integrated into the larger society through their interaction.

Employment is the best and the quickest way to integrate. If I work with you, then you can learn my culture and the others working in other companies – from there our image in the society gets communicated and we kind of, you know, will believe that we are part of this society. (Young male participant)

These expectations, however, did not turn into reality. In 2011 the unemployment rate among the Sudanese-born population was 29.9 % (Lucas et al., 2011), almost six times the average (5.2%) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012). Further, those employed are often underemployed and/or clustered in low occupational status immigrant employment niches (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2009).

Employment was seen by participants as the dominant pathway to economic security and regaining their lost dignity, humanity and respect. The consequence of high levels of unemployment and underemployment in the South Sudanese community is economic hardship and impoverished existence compared to other Australians. For example, in 2011 the average weekly income of a Sudanese-born individual was less than half (\$294) of that of an Australian-born person (\$597), while the average weekly income of a Sudanese family (\$805) was just above half of an Australian family (\$1,492) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011a).

The next section examines the main reasons for underemployment despite the evident strong desire in the community for economic participation.

The main reasons identified by participants for not being able to attain employment, despite their strong desire for economic participation, included lack of social capital, such as networks mediating employment, and, for some, low human capital, such as skills and English proficiency. At the same time, participants argued that a more stressing issue is the non-recognition of elements of human capital, including qualifications from Australian institutions, and unequal opportunities for refugees within the Australian employment and recruitment systems. They reported, with some justification, lack of support from government to remove structural barriers that made these obstacles to employment so difficult for individuals to surmount.

Human capital: Skills and English proficiency

Proficiency in English is an important predictor of employment in Australia, and poor English speakers are disproportionately represented among the unemployed (Bureau of Immigration Multicultural and Population Research, 1996). All participants identified the

need to have a good command of the English language, and to improve their English language skills when needed, in order to be able to participate in the economic and social life of Australia. The Australian Government also views proficiency in English as one of the most important indicators of integration and resettlement (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2006). Yet the current provision and support for migrants to learn the language of their new country does not reflect this importance.

English proficiency in the Sudanese community is relatively low with 8.9% of males and 23.6% of females either not speaking English well or not at all (Lucas et al., 2011). All participants, including community workers, believed that the current provision of the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP), which delivers up to 510 hours of basic English tuition, is grossly inadequate for adult migrants with very little or no previous experience in formal education to learn a new language. Additionally, as argued by a Sudanese community worker, AMEP programs often fail to appreciate fundamental characteristics among their students, such as relatively low skill level and formal learning experience, and different learning styles.

They've been to English classes, the CIT classes, for 510 hours without learning A, B and C. They managed to teach them nothing. And I don't blame them. Many of us are coming from a village where only one per cent of the women went to school. Just learning to hold a pen took time. (Female Sudanese community worker)

Participant observations that the current provision of English training is inadequate is supported by studies in areas of language acquisition showing that the process of acquiring a new language requires seven to 11 years (Thomas and Collier, 2002), and possibly longer for adult migrants. Clearly, current programs supporting the acquisition of English language among humanitarian migrants have failed to achieve their aim of providing adequate pathways towards integration.

Social capital: Informal connections and networks mediating employment

Another challenge for obtaining employment identified by participants is the lack of informal extended networks that facilitate job-search. As expressed by one participant: '... the problem for our community is that we don't have that connection where you can easily access employment opportunities'. This observation is supported by quantitative evidence. A Perth-based study of former refugees, employers, and recruitment agents found a significantly lower use of family and other looser networks to find a job among African groups compared to other refugee groups (Tilbury and Colic-Peisker, 2007).

Social connections is one of the important domains of Ager and Strang's (2008) conceptual model of refugee integration where bonding and bridging networks (Putnam, 2000) are vital mediators of integration outcomes, such as employment and education. While empirical evidence on the role of bonding social capital on employment is mixed, the positive role of bridging social capital has been confirmed (Lancee, 2010, Stone et al., 2003).

Although participants talked of strong bonding social capital within the community, the value of these connections for finding employment is limited. Most Sudanese refugees arrived in

Australia within the last ten years (Lucas et al., 2011) and very few had connections with, or experience of, Australian employers. Unlike bonding social capital, bridging social capital is relatively weak in the Sudanese Australian community. Yet, despite its important function for employment outcomes, employment service providers fail to act on assisting the development of such social connections. Rather, they see their role as ‘expert mediators’ between the unemployed and potential employers, and providers of training to job seekers (Tilbury and Colic-Peisker, 2007). As suggested by a community worker participant in this study, whose previous job was in the employment services industry, ‘employment services are either unaware of the needs of their refugee migrant clients, or are unable to deliver solutions within their current operational protocols’.

Failure to recognise human capital and discrimination from employers

The issue most concerning to participants in relation to unemployment is the large proportion of graduates in their community with a qualification from Australian universities who cannot find employment. Some participants believed their inability to obtain professional employment was linked to discrimination against black Africans.

Our graduates are not being able to get a job; it is the same all over the country and there is mixed feelings of how come they can’t get a job. So yes it is true that we are facing discrimination, but it is not done in a way that it can be proved - it is done in a very clever way. (Male Sudanese community leader)

The above narrative speaks strongly of the disappointment among participants and their concerns about discrimination. Some referred to the phenomenon as ‘hidden prejudice’ or ‘hidden racism’. This strong sense of discrimination by Australian workplace recruitment practices against African community has been reported in many other Australian studies (for example, Abdelkerim and Grace, 2012, Correa-Velez and Onsando, 2009, Dhanji, 2009, Gebre-Selassie, 2008, Tilbury and Colic-Peisker, 2007).

Additionally, a comprehensive evaluation by Graeme Hugo of the labour market experience of humanitarian immigrants found quantitative evidence of discrimination in the Australian labour market. The report found that unemployment and downward mobility was higher among humanitarian migrants than among Australian-born or other visa categories of immigrants. While there was improvement with length of residence in Australia and over generations, this did not apply to all groups. Some groups, such as those from Africa, continue to experience higher levels of unemployment even after a considerable length of residence. Hugo concluded that even after ‘controlling for a range of factors such as language and education, a ‘refugee gap’ remains and ‘discrimination in the labour market is still in evidence’ (Hugo, 2011).

However, employers reject the notion of discriminatory recruitment practices. The study by Colic-Peisker and Tilbury described how the employers they interviewed were either not aware of discriminatory practices in Australian workplaces or did not accept responsibility for it. Some employers advised that refugees, including skilled refugees, did not have job-relevant characteristics including communication abilities, or ‘cultural knowledge’, or that

they would not ‘fit in’ with other staff. This was often stated as a ‘soft skill’ related to ‘Australian-ness’. The authors concluded that for employers ‘cultural difference is seen as a legitimate reason for exclusion from the job market’ (Tilbury and Colic-Peisker, 2007). In other words, subjectively-defined concepts of ‘Australian-ness’ by employees have become a basis for denying the opportunity for Sudanese and other humanitarian migrants to economically integrate into their new country.

Despite increasing evidence of discrimination against humanitarian migrants in the labour market, it is not broadly acknowledged, as it is widely believed that the range of Australian anti-discrimination laws in Australian workplaces, including merit-based selection practices, give equal rights and access to all job seekers. Below I explore the extent to which this widely held belief holds true for humanitarian migrant communities.

Structural barriers and unequal opportunity within the system

A main barrier preventing South Sudanese job seekers in gaining employment, especially professional employment, is not having work experience—an important criterion in selection procedures for employment. Below are the words of a participant who was about to complete his post-graduate studies at an Australian university

So where can they get experience? The employers want someone with experience. We have the qualification, but we don’t have this experience. Where can we get it? It is hard. (Male participant)

Lack of opportunity for work experience prevents South Sudanese jobseekers from competing with other applicants in the labour market. Although there are a few small-scale, state government or private enterprise-based initiatives (for example: African Australian Inclusion Program, by the National Australia Bank in partnership with Jesuit Social Services; or the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Government’s Work Experience and Support Program (WESP)), there is no Federal Government program to provide opportunities for humanitarian migrants. Unless an opportunity to gain experience and develop networks is given, unemployment becomes self-perpetuating. Some of the study participants argued that the universal application of merit-based selection systems was unfair unless there was provision made for disadvantaged groups.

A merit-based selection system is the standard method of selection for all Australian Public Service (APS) and most non-APS engagement. It follows an assessment based on the candidate’s work-related and personal qualities. It is designed to be blind to race, gender, religious or political differences. The principles of the merit-based selection system rest on recognition theory which emphasises equal rights, respect and esteem for the diverse identities of societies (Honneth, 1992, Taylor, 1992, Young, 1990). There is debate within this school of thought regarding the extent to which it should recognise difference. While some theorists maintain that equality of opportunities requires rights to be difference-blind (Barry, 2001), others have argued that rights need to recognise such differences in order to give people substantively, rather than formally, equal opportunities (Holtug and Mason, 2010).

Young distinguishes between *equal treatment* and *recognition of equal worth*. *Recognition of equal worth*, she argues, ‘requires different treatment for oppressed or disadvantaged groups’. Young reasons that under *equal treatment*, group differences are reduced to ‘a purely accidental and private matter’ (Young, 1990). Such a trend is indeed evident in Australian labour recruitment practices. For example, a submission by the Refugee Council of Australia to the general review of employment services reported that some refugees were ‘made to feel personally responsible for their disadvantage’ (Refugee Council of Australia, 2008). But, the relative disadvantage of humanitarian migrants is not a result of personal choices under their control. As evidenced through the narrative of one of the participants below, the disadvantage of humanitarian migrants comes from their refugee experiences, which include fleeing their home involuntarily, arriving in Australia with broken educational and employment histories and minimal financial resources, and finding unfamiliar recruitment practices and minimal informal networks to assist their search for jobs.

We have so many wars to fight ahead of us. We were fighting a war of being refugees; then we were fighting a war of proving that we are refugees; we are fighting a war of being a different colour; we are fighting a war of our accent and our grammar, and now we are fighting a war of getting a job. And we have to compete regardless of all our disadvantages. This is how this country is. (Male Sudanese community leader)

Because of their refugee experiences, refugees are not entering the labour market on equal terms with people who grew up in Australia. Thus the merit-based selection system with its approach of equal treatment, fails to account for the fact that refugees are not on equal terms with the rest of the population. The merit-based selection system may indeed block the economic participation of humanitarian migrants and heighten their socio-economic disadvantage. As argued by Young, ‘sometimes recognizing particular rights for groups is the only way to promote their participation’ (Young, 1990).

Many of the study participants had an intuitive understanding of the unfairness of the universal application of the merit-based selection system and believed that ‘the government should look into these things’. When I asked participants as to what the government could do in their view, responses centered on three main themes. The first theme is ‘fixing the system’. For example, some participants argued that there should be other means available to them to demonstrate their ability to perform the job they apply for besides demonstrated experience in Australia. The second main theme identified by participants is programs, specific to humanitarian migrants, to gain skills and work experience. Participants from the ACT talked positively of the WESP. This program has both skill training and work placement components. A number of Sudanese Australians have participated in this program and obtained employment as a direct result. Participants asked for more such programs to improve humanitarian migrants’ capacity to compete for jobs on equal terms with other applicants.

The third emerging theme for improving the economic inclusion of Sudanese Australians is, effectively, affirmative action, although participants did not use the term. Affirmative action refers to policies that take into consideration factors including race, colour, religion, sex, or

national origin, in order to benefit an underrepresented group in areas of employment, education, and business (Fullinwider, 2011). A few participants believed that the only way to stop continuous unemployment among humanitarian migrants is to give them a job. As one non-Sudanese community worker concluded, after describing all the barriers humanitarian refugees face to obtain a job and the negative impact their unemployment has on integration: 'I often thought that maybe what we should do is to actually set them up with a job if we are going to let them into the country'.

Improving economic and social participation of specific groups through assuring their representation in workplaces and social institutions is not uncommon. While there is little current emphasis for achieving ethnic diversity in Australia, gender diversity is a recognised target for some workplaces and institutions. For example, over half of Australia's largest companies have adopted policies for achieving gender diversity (Clarke and Klettner, 2013). Other countries, such as New Zealand and Canada, also recognise the desirability of ethnic diversity in workplaces including in government sectors. For example, New Zealand uses affirmative action to empower migrants and refugees to improve their participation. They are encouraged to become involved in managing settlement services especially and to work in government and other sectors, thus increasing their integration (Gebre-Selassie, 2008). The benefits of recruiting migrants, including humanitarian migrants, to organisations also flows to the employers. Inclusion of refugees and migrants in organisations and authorities, especially those managing and supporting settlement services, would improve the cross-cultural expertise in these organisations and their better engagement with clients.

Discussion

This research presented evidence of how social structures created exclusionary spaces among Sudanese resettled refugees. On their arrival in Australia, most members of the Sudanese community strongly identified with the Australian cultural goal of economic participation and success, and have pursued pathways, such as education and employment, to achieve these goals. Under the framework of Merton's modes of adaptation, they were ready to adopt one of the foremost cultural goals of their society and approved institutional means to achieve it. Participants felt that they had a lot to offer to Australia and were confident of their abilities in terms of either already having or acquiring the human capital needed for economic participation. However, they were concerned about blocked means, in the form of lack of recognition of their human capital, low social capital, and structural barriers preventing them from entering the labour market. These less recognisable, systemic barriers, while greatly limiting their access of attaining employment, fall outside their influence. Yet, Australian Government institutions have failed to examine the extent to which Australian social structures equitably facilitate the economic and social inclusion of resettled refugees.

The way in which social structures motivate people are important in a Mertonian analysis. A central question posed by Merton (1968) is what kind of signals for efforts are given? For example, would graduating from an Australian tertiary institute lead to employment among Sudanese Australians, or would employment remain constrained because of their location in

the social order? The present research found that, despite transcending one of the most important and generally recognised pathways to employment (i.e. education), many Sudanese graduates remain unemployed largely because of structural barriers. The sense of frustration and inability to overcome these structural barriers led some people in the Sudanese community to abandon the normative goal of employment and pathways to pursue it. Participants talked of feeling frustrated and aggrieved, their lack of trust in Australian institutions and authorities and, importantly, their lack faith in the possibility of a good future for their families in Australia. To borrow the words of Merton, while they are '*in the [Australian] society*', they are '*not of it*' (Merton, 1968). In the view of Merton, retreatism is an individual rather than a collective response and it is the least common mode of adaptation. But, results from this research suggest that it is becoming a dominant form of adaptation among the Sudanese community because of structural barriers that undermine their hope and restrict their opportunities.

This study illustrates the disconnect between cultural goals towards which all members of Australian society, including humanitarian migrants, are expected to strive and social structures providing, or in some instances restricting, access to approved means of reaching these goals. In essence, current Australian resettlement policies are dominated by a strong emphasis on migrants adopting their new country's cultural goals (such as economic participation and test for citizenship), without a corresponding emphasis on ensuring that there are effective means for humanitarian migrant groups to achieve these goals. Yet, the Australian Government is not picking up on the systemic issue of this disconnect. Instead, discourse from the government focuses on the conduct of resettled refugees, such as their economic participation rate and their readiness to adopt Australian cultural values. To achieve these outcomes resettled refugees are expected, after a brief transition period, to use standard modes of means delivered and supported by main-stream social and government institutions. The widely held assumption is that existing mechanisms and protocols (such as impersonality, equity, uniformity and universalism, codes of conduct, the merit-based recruitment system) developed to ensure that institutions provide equal access to all members of Australian society (Sturges, 2001) will also ensure equal rights to resettled humanitarian and other migrant groups.

This research, however, found the simplistic application of these mechanisms and protocols to be unresponsive to the needs of South Sudanese Australians and presumably other resettled refugees. Despite growing empirical evidence (for example, Colic-Peisker and Tilbury, 2007, Hugo, 2011) governments maintain that these processes provide an equal playing field to all. This paper demonstrated that these processes do not account for the disadvantage of humanitarian migrant groups and fail to provide equitable paths to shared goals and ambitions. Instead these mechanisms favour those already socialised to the functioning and operation of these institutions and thus know how to work the 'system'. 'Understanding the system' or 'knowing the system' is a frequently used expression among participants of this research. It has been a powerful metaphor communicating their exclusion by subjecting them to protocols and processes that are either inaccessible or lacking in meaning to them.

An emphasis in social policies on *formal*, as opposed to *substantive*, equal rights and access has led to unfair and discriminatory outcomes for the South Sudanese community. The current simplistic, difference-blind application of equal recognition principles restricts access to refugees. Instead, equal recognition policies have to be nuanced enough to recognise and address the inherent social, cultural, economic, and linguistic disadvantages of migrants groups that restricts progress towards shared goals and ambitions.

This paper presents the case for higher levels of engagement from the Australian Government to remove or moderate structural barriers in order to improve the economic and social participation, and subsequent integration, of resettled refugees in Australia. In the case of the South Sudanese Australian community, blocked pathways to economic security and reduced prospect of regaining lost dignity and humanity have led some Sudanese Australians to retreatism and social withdrawal from Australian government authorities, institutions and, to some extent, the broader Australian community. Social distancing from institutions and communities can have long-term detrimental impact on both refugees and the broader society. It can lead to entrenched resentment and systemic problems, including anomie and deviance in structurally excluded and stigmatised communities. But, resettlement need not be a discouraging experience. When managed with care for ensuring that accessible pathways and support to navigate pathways towards inclusion are available to refugees, resettlement can be a flourishing passage, contributing positively both to the life of refugees and the cultural, intellectual and economic wealth of the receiving country.

Figure 1: Conceptual frameworks of integration

Figure 1: Conceptual frameworks of integration

Figure 2: Sudan-born arrivals in Australia

Source: LUCAS, D., JAMALI, M. & EDGAR, B. 2013. *A Statistical profile of the Sudan-born in Australia*. In: MARLOWE, J., HARRIS, A. & LYONS, T. (ed.) *Sudanese diaspora in Australia and New Zealand: Reconciling the past with the present*.

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